

EQUALIZING X DISTORT

Volume 12, Issue 04

November 2012

START DANCING

Start Dancing was an all ages punk dance organized by kids in the scene. The events happened between 1981 and 1984 every Friday night at some Legion Hall, church basement, synagogue, or community space in Toronto. Start Dancing may be a reason for why Toronto has always had such a strong all ages scene. Once a month bands would get added to the bill. The dances were originally DJ'd and I remember seeing kids bring their newly bought records up to the turntable and play them. It was like a community jukebox. These dances were truly a lifeline to any kid who was a punk or a mod or a rude boy or girl. The one time I went it was pretty eye opening as school dances were never like this. I never read anything about Start Dancing, but when I learned that Mark was involved I realized we had to get the organizers together to tell us about it.

Introduce yourselves and tell us how you were involved in Start Dancing.

Vera (V): I'm Vera Bigall. I went to high school in an alternative school in Scarborough, with some of the guys from L'ETRANGER, and we started up Start Dancing because we couldn't really get out to clubs, and so ... with a whole group of friends we started up a club where we could book bands and start to see them out live. Gerry (G): I'm Gerry Doyle who was one of the partners. They had started out a few months I think before me and then – maybe a month – and I thought Vera was her sister and I started talking to her on the bus, so we just started talking, and she said, "What do you do?" and I said "I build sound systems," and she said, "I need a sound system!"



How convenient?

G: Yeah.

Mark (M): I'm Mark Sanders, I just went down the first night, and I ended up working the door for about two-and-a-half years, occasionally spinning records; it was my job to kick people out or beat people up.

Oh, you had the fun job.

D (D): And Dan, I went the first night as well; I think I talked Vera and Paul into letting me DJ, and that's what I ended up doing.

I haven't read a lot of things on Start Dancing, so I was wondering if you could give me a synopsis or a bit about what Start Dancing was, 'cause I haven't seen it written a lot about in our Toronto history, but I think it was a very important part of at least the punk scene.

M: Well, probably the reason you didn't hear a lot about it is because we didn't sell alcohol, and we were just a youth club, literally, and that's where really I think, Vera was the heart of it, got it started, and kept it going, so maybe

you could tell us ...

V: I think the biggest thing was that most of us were under nineteen years old or eighteen and couldn't get into bars, and any of the great music that was coming from England or new bands in Toronto were playing in bars, so we would go to the Turning Point or Larry's Hideaway and stand outside for three hours 'til we could sneak in the back door, or go eat dinner and stay there for six hours, where they didn't check ID.

That was the way of getting around ... without the ID.

V: And I grew up in south Scarborough where there was a dance hall at St. Boniface Church, and they used to book a battle of the bands, and there was no alcohol, and I kind of probably got that idea from that, and then we said, "Why don't we just book a hall?" So we started booking halls and said, "O.K., we could get some bands or we could get a DJs in," and thank goodness for Gerry because he knew how to do sound and we didn't. We had the idea, Dan had the records, Mark was good at the door, so ...

VERA BIGALL



Everyone brought their specialty to it, or whatever ...

V: Yeah, and I think the spontaneous amazing thing about it was that people would show up and help; like it wasn't just two people ...

G: It was a community; it was a community spirit in what was going on.

You don't see that so much these days. And why do you think that community spirit came about, just, on its own?

G: I think that today, "It's all about me." Back then, the music was all about us.

V: Yeah, definitely, the punk movement brought a fresh wave of caring about politics, caring about people that maybe weren't represented, like we're seeing right now at the Occupy the Cities. It was a similar type of idea, that these were young people taking back music. You know, that you could go and record something even though you weren't really rich or part of a studio, you could go and get something done. So, we were excited about bands that were talking about that kind of thing. And I do think that today there is some of it.

For sure.

G: But there's so much right now on MTV, where you see someone "Pimp My Ride," "look at all the jewellery I've got" – back then, people would go, "That's stupid."

Yeah. But that's never had anything to do with the underground, too, right? It's different. But one of the things I wonder is – and one of the things that you touched on, Vera – was that there wasn't anything like

this anywhere else, like, in terms of the punk scene. The punk scene was relatively new, and it was being ignored ... there was some attention, there were some people writing articles about it, but largely if you didn't do anything, if you didn't make shows happen, they wouldn't.

G: Well, people went out to drink, but the thing is, if you were of age, the DIODES, bands like that, they were getting gigs, and – remember when we had PURPLE HEARTS actually play at our gig, but they played at the Gasworks. When they played at the Gasworks ...

Which is more of like a rock bar, right?

G: ... yeah, they got \$2,000 to play at the Gasworks, and Jake Gold was their manager at

EQUALIZING DISTORT

VOLUME 12, ISSUE 04

EQUALIZING-X-DISTORT MONTHLY is an extension of the weekly radio show heard on CIUT 89.5 FM every Sunday nights from 10:00pm 'til midnight (Participants: Rob Ferraz, D'Arcy Rix-Hayes, Stephe Perry, and Ed Pyves).

The show dedicates itself to the underground hardcore punk scene. There is a particular emphasis on international releases in the developing straight edge, garage, Killed By Death, kang, pop punk, and power violence which means we play bands like Demolition, the Pow Wows, Modern Minds, Desperat, the Capitalist Kids, and Beatriz Carnicero.

There is a weekly demo feature (paying homage to the cassette format), weekly event listings, and a monthly top 10 retrospective look at new releases.

Equalizing-X-Distort

CIUT 89.5 FM

Sundays 10:00 pm - midnight

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CIUT 89.5 FM - "Equalizing Distort" Top 10 Hardcore Releases for August 2012

Band	Title	Format	Label
1. BRAIN KILLER	"War"	ep	Vinyl Rites
2. CITIZENS PATROL	"Retarded Nation"	ep	Way Back / Spastic Fantastic
3. THE FORUM	"The Master's Wall"	ep	Harsh Crust
4. AUTUUS	demo	cassette	Self-Released
5. DEATH BY SNOO SNOO	"Tasta Saat"	LP	Creative Class War
6. DEAD ENDING	self-titled	12"	Alternative Tentacles
7. ANIMAL INSTINCT	"Unfinished Business"	LP	Take it back
8. PURE SCUM	demo	cassette	Sorry State
9. HARHAA	demo	cassette	Self-Released
10. VIOLENT FUTURE	demo	cassette	Self-Released

Equalizing Distort can be heard every Sunday night on CIUT 89.5 FM at 10:00 pm. The top 10 countdown can be heard in its entirety, complete with previews of the picks and analysis on the previous month in hardcore, on the last Sunday of the month.

that time, and when they came to play with us, it was really interesting because they were playing for nothing, because we didn't have a budget, but they wanted to play to who was there. Jake calls me and is talking to me about the band maybe not wanting to play because we didn't feature them in the poster, and I said, "O.K., Jake, fine: I don't care." You know, we respect each band equally, each band gets their quarter of the page, so I called up the band, and they said, "Don't worry about Jake, we'll be there." And with all due respect to Jake, who was just trying to make sure that the band was making money, he was probably confused: "The week before they got paid two-thousand bucks, and they want to play this place for nothing? Huh?" M: But as well, a lot of the clubs, they wouldn't even take bands that were underage, it was really hard. I mean, I can remember when I was fifteen when I played the Turning Point, Ann, the lady who ran the place, kicked my amp down the stairs, punched me in the face, and said, "Get the fuck out of here, you guys are too young."

G: After you played.
M: Yeah, after we played. So, it was one of those things where, if you wanted shows to happen, you had to make them happen. And I used to book parties all the time. I would have a party and my punk band the DEGENERATS would play, INSIDE OUT would play, BERLIN WAVE would play, and those Scarborough – I don't know if you came to some of those, Dan.
D: Of course.

M: ... but by the time we finished playing we had to fight our way out the front door 'cause the guys were looking to kill us, but we did those about once a month. So when Start Dancing came around, it just seemed like it was more organized and you didn't have to fight your way out.

D: And so I was going to say, in terms of that sense of community, if you were in high school in 1981 the battle lines were drawn, if you were a mod, or a punk, or a rockabilly, or even the early days of the new romantics, you were threatened every single day, and Start Dancing



INSIDE OUT

was the place for these kids to go on Friday night and feel safe.

It was like a punk-rock high-school dance.

D: Yeah, almost like a *Breakfast Club* on Friday nights. But it wasn't just mod: it was any music that was on the outside, any sort of rebel music was welcome, and that's why you had reggae, rockabilly, new romantic; I remember Mark introducing synthesizer music to Start Dancing, and people were to some extent open to it. Also, we all know that even in subcultures there's a strict adherence to sort of formats, right, and I can remember.

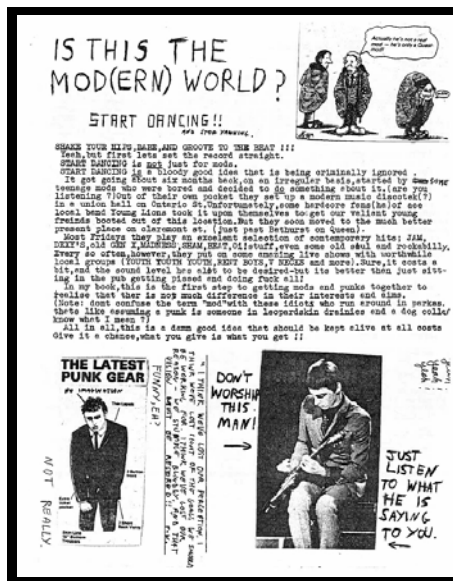
But back then not so much because just difference was the thing that brought us

together.

D: It was, exactly, yeah.

G: The music was fantastic.

I don't think there's been a time that's equalled that since, but there's attempts, and I see it actually happening again, a revival, maybe like calls of unity or whatever you want to call it, or diversity, coexisting, right? I wanted to read something that Mark shared with me: there was a fanzine called *Sounds from the Street* that describes Start Dancing as "the first step at getting mods and punks together



to realize that there is not much difference in their interests and aims." So is that an accurate description?

G: We would have on stage the V-NECKS, then after the V-NECKS, YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH ...

I don't know if people know who the V-NECKS were. Could you describe who the V-NECKS were? I get your analogy, but could you describe what types of bands these were?

G: Well, I'll describe YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH, and I'll let you guys describe the V-NECKS – but don't forget the drum solo from the V-NECKS.

By Oscar?

G: Oh, so you know Oscar too? YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH was just raw energy, just fantastic, and they were very, "support youth" – in their title, they said, "Support youth: care." I remember the guitar player lost his pick when he was playing so hard, and he came off the stage and his hands were just so completely bloody. I just loved it: it was just great. But you



APB

guys describe the V-NECKS.

M: TOMMY JAMES AND THE SHONDELLS with a beat box.

Yeah: two very polar opposites within the same.

G: And getting along great. That's what it was about.

M: I don't think there was fights between punks and mods in Toronto; I think that was bullshit from the British newspapers and magazines: it was not in Toronto.

V: It was too small a scene for that to happen: if you saw somebody else unique at your high school, you're going, "Wow – you must be interested in something. You must know something about British music or about what's going on in England," and you'd be interested. And I think that that's the thing: there wasn't enough people for us to go, "O.K., we've got a gang of these people and a gang of these people."

G: In England, I was just there the summer before, there really was serious clashes, serious differences in class, in groups of people, and they had a chip on their shoulders, like that's where punk came from, there was a real economic and social class conflict, which you can hear in the JAM, where they're talking about what it's like, you know, "Eton Rifles," et cetera, things like that, and you're listening to that kind of thing, and we didn't have that here, everyone just got along really great, and I think it's because we were fortunate we didn't have the economic strife or the class distinction in Canada, we were too new a country – still are, you know – fortunately, one of the greatest countries because of that.

D: And everyone had that common enemy, too, at high school: you might get beat up by the rockers, so whether you were a new romantic or a mod or whatever, you sort of joined together.

Survival, mostly.

D: Yeah, and one of the defining songs at Start Dancing every Friday night – or one of the defining bands – was SHAM 69, and that whole idea that the kids are united.

That's what I was going to say: this reminds me of that song in terms of, like, it just seems to embody that spirit of binding together, right?

D: Yeah. And everyone would be up on the dance floor when that song ...

So it was like an unofficial anthem.

D: Yeah, it was. Totally.

V: I was trying to think how we came up with the name Start Dancing, and that's one of the few songs that has the line, "If we get together, it'll just be a start." And I'm pretty sure, 'cause I know Paul Dakota – he was one of the other

key players in this – that that was one of our favourite songs.

There was also a "start" reference in one of the JAM songs, so I was wondering if that had something to do with it, too, 'cause it sort of crossed over between punk and mod, right?

V: Well, we're definitely JAM fans.

M: That song came after Start Dancing.

V: Yeah, it did.

G: But the spirit of the music, whether it came after Start Dancing or before, the spirit of the people and the spirit of the music is there, and I think Vera and Paul came up with it, and I think it was perfect: as soon as you walk in, you're not drinking, you're not drunk, so I'll start dancing.

One of the things we haven't talked about was the turntable.

V: How we got it?

M: How could we afford it?

There wasn't always bands at these events, that was a later addition to some of the events, right?

G: We worked out a deal with the club owner that we would have ...

Was it in clubs, or ...?

G: No, they were halls. And I remember the day that I joined them was freezing cold in January, and I was just renting the P.A. at the time to them, and poor Vera and Paul, who were very, very young at the time – a whole year-

and-a-half younger than me – and I was the old man there ... they rented the hall, and it was \$350 (and me and Mark were just talking about this). At the time, minimum wage was \$2.15, so this was a massive fortune, and they were white in the face because it was a snowstorm or a freezing day, no one showed up, and I said to them, "Look: I'll be a partner with you guys, let me go talk to the manager." And somehow I convinced the manager to let us have it on a Friday night – I

says, "Are you renting it on a Friday night?" He says, "No." "Would you like some income?" So I got the place for one-hundred-and-a-quarter was the deal; I got him to reduce the debt we had that night by a hundred bucks. I says, "I'll pay you off when



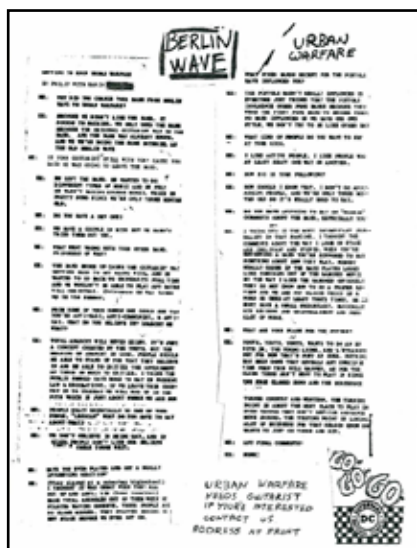
PAUL DAKOTA, a key organizer behind Start Dancing

we do more gigs," and I said, "Every fourth week, we would have bands." Which was good for me, too, because it was a lot to put on a band night, so three days was DJs, the fourth week was a band, and we got it on a Friday night, and the hall was beautiful, the one we had on Claremont, it was just sounded really beautiful, and it had a really old sort of look to it.

M: Well, we had choices, remember? Downstairs was smaller, and that's where we had the dances for music, and when we had bands we were upstairs, and we had a stage. I mean, you get two halls in one: it was really custom-made for us.

G: Sometimes we had it downstairs, too, though. If he could rent it upstairs, the band would be downstairs, which of course is pretty ironic because you'd have some sort of wedding or something going on upstairs and a pile of punks downstairs.

I want to talk about Claremont, but before we get into all that I want to get more of an idea of what they could expect at a show. So, again, I'm referring to this *Sounds from the Street* editorial that describes it. It says, "Most Fridays, they play an excellent selection of contemporary hits – JAM, DEXY's, old GEN X, MADNESS [there was a distinction with "old GEN X"], SHAM, BEAT, Oi stuff, even some old soul and rockabilly. Every so often, however, they put on amazing live shows with worthwhile local



groups: YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH, RENT BOYS, V-NECKS, and more. Sure, it costs a bit, and the sound level has a bit to be desired, but it's better than sitting in a pub getting pissed and doing fuck all." Is that an accurate description of what you could expect at a Start Dancing event ...

D: I think it is.

... in terms of the diversity of music?

D: Especially the range of the sounds.

G: I would like to object to the [comments on the] sound quality. I'll have you know that I got real lucky with our sound system: we had a fantastic sound engineer from Westbury Sound, and we had a really fantastic P.A., and, ironically, Jake, one of his objections was for PURPLE HEARTS was "I need this kind of P.A.," and I said, "No, we're bringing this one," and after we ran it and the band played through it, he turned to me and says, "You know, that was pretty good."

M: You go to nightclubs now, and the sound system isn't as good as we had there. Honestly, I was at the Hard Luck Bar the other day, and the P.A. sucked, and this is like a running organization. We had a better P.A. system ...

G: 'Cause I had a friend in there, and I was in the business already building P.A.; at the same time I was already building speaker cabinets for big-name bands – I won't mention any – but ... M [coughing]: RUSH.

G: You shouldna done that, Mark, 'cause ... **But I think it actually situates just how good the sound system would have been, right? And RUSH is a big name, right?**

G: Yeah, but how much fun it was for me, personally, as wonderful as all of these bands, these corporate successful bands were, quite honestly, and I swear, I'd rather watch bands like the V-NECKS or YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH because the fantastic thing about the place that we had and the energy that came there is people were playing their music for the sake of the music. The other end of my business was people were playing to become rock stars and to get rich and all that, and, so, for me, Friday nights was an enjoyable evening, where I could see people really caring about what they were doing, and money was not part of it.

I remember going to high-school dances and RUSH and SAGA and all those bands would be playing, doing the high-school-



Chris Welsh, Mike Myers, and Dave MacKenzie

dance circuit, and they were awful. I mean, like, you had to listen to them, but, you're right: there was this rock-star attitude, and if you went to a punk show it was exactly the opposite: there was an energy and a liveliness to it that was just so, like, you just had to be there, and it would drive you, and it would get you through the next week or whatever.

G: You know, I gotta take exception to what you're saying. I don't believe that SAGA or RUSH or any band is truly awful.

O.K.

G: I believe that if people listen to music, if they – at the end of the day ...

I felt they were there to get a cheque, and ...

G: They did make a lot of money.

... and to play to fans, there was this distinction between crowd and band.

G: Well, I know RUSH personally: great musicians, they love what they play, and so did SAGA, I know those guys. I learned at a very young age to not judge music because, at the end of the day, if someone is listening to something, and they paid for that record, and they're happy that they have it, then that's entertainment.

M: I have to say, too, MAX WEBSTER played our high school, and MAX WEBSTER was probably one of the best bands I saw – that was in their prime – and you couldn't get a better band at that time, and that wasn't even the sort of music that I liked.



MAX WEBSTER

But there was a distinction – I guess my point being maybe they weren't awful – I used the wrong word ...

G: You didn't like it – how about that?

No, no, yeah, that's part of it, but certainly I think there was a different energy.

G: Yes.

M: Yeah, those bands would have shows that they would put on, like Kim Mitchell's not going to wear around a purple leopard-print leotard and white shoes and say "Hi" to everybody.

G: It was a business. It was definitely a business, and the bands that played with us, it was not a business, it was practically a movement.

Yeah, and you could just go up and talk to them and ask them how they were doing or how they figured out how to play a bass or whatever, and that would spark the next wave of the scene.

G: Well, Vera arranged to get all of the bands, and the fact that they didn't have agents, managers, that's ... probably you could talk about that.

V: I was just going to say that what made it exciting for me was that people cared about politics and the world, they were interested, and a lot of the money that we made did end up going to things like Rock Against Racism or Amnesty International was a big recipient of any profits that we made. We wanted to be pretty clear that profits that were going to be made – if they were – they would go to something, either building up the sound system or to a cause.

G: We were making big money, almost twenty, sometimes thirty dollars a show? [laughter]

V: For me, when you talk about all these different groups coming together, there was an excitement, and I think there was even an excitement between the bands to see another band trying something different. And, for the DJs, I have to say, every week we would go "O.K., who are the DJs going to be?" And Dan being one of them, he brought a whole influence of dub and some reggae music that I had never heard before.

D: I thought, "I'm gonna be the next LEE PERRY," right? Like a sound-system DJ I went up to Eglinton West and bought some dub plates, I got the latest, hardest sounds from Jamaica. I thought, "This is it: I'm going to be the next LEE PERRY." I started playing these things – I cleared the dance floor in a second. There were tumbleweeds blowing through the



RUSH



SAGA

dance floor, and finally this little mod came up and said, “You gonna play ‘Mirror in the Bathroom’ or what?” [laughs] I said, “Yeah, I’m gonna play it.” But Vera told me, unbeknownst to me, some Rastas came to the door, and they were like, “Ya man, who’s playing that chill sound,” you know? And they look down and see this seventeen-year-old skinny white kid who thinks he’s at Studio One in Jamaica, but that’s what it was all about, wasn’t it?

One of many defining moments, I’m sure.

G: But, collectively, all of the music that came in was just great to listen to, all of it.

M: I think that we were all really proud to be associated with Rock Against Racism ‘cause, I don’t know if people remember, but, at that time, the Ku Klux Klan was talking about coming into Toronto. And we’d heard about Rock Against Racism in England, it starts in Canada in Toronto, and I know that Vera was heavily into supporting that, and I think that our next poster had Rock Against Racism on it and on our posters for a long time ...

V: Right.

M: ... and the bands that met there, the next time there’s a Rock Against Racism concert, and there’s me and Andy Cash dancing on stage with the RHEOSTATICS, going, “Yeah, we’re not going to stand for this,” and, sure enough, the Ku Klux Klan packed their bags and went home.

V: I think, too, I remember being interviewed a lot at the time about the ska movement, because that in England was with a blend of white and black musicians and the reggae bringing in the ENGLISH BEAT type music, and we believed in that, so ...

As a response to the racism that was happening.

V: Right. As a spin-off from our club, you’re right, a lot of bands would meet and end up going on to other gigs, and I remember being asked to help out with things like that. My biggest follow-up to Start Dancing was I got to help with Amnesty International’s “Human Rights Now” tour with Springsteen and Gabriel, and I was the Toronto organizer for that, and that’s, like, what a thrill, to start as a beginning little organizer for a dance club and be able to be ...

G: She organized well. Don’t put yourself down. She did really well. She knew where everything was going, what was happening, it was good.

Someone had to keep everyone on track.

M: Well, Vera was the den mother, really.

G: That’s correct, yes.

M: Even when you’re one year older than me, you’re like the den mother, I felt like a dumb kid: “What do we do?”

V: I have to say, I was a fan. I was a real fan of music, and so every time a band would get on stage, I started off as I said as a fan of L’ETRANGER, going to school with Chuck Angus, who’s now a Member of Parliament in Canada.

Yeah, that’s right.

V: And, you know, I just looked up to them so much, I heard their music, they wrote about politics around the world and I’m going, “I’ve got to see other bands like this,” and then I’d see them opening for L’ETRANGER or someone, and that started me, so as a fan, I’m going, “I want to see these bands, but I can’t get in to Larry’s Hideaway, so let’s make our own club.”

How do you make this happen, so everyone can see it.

D: And I think Vera’s touched on something there, like, the people I met there, I used to talk to Charlie Angus there, and Andrew Cash – they’re both Members of Parliament now, very influential people – ...

G: Amazing, really, when you think about it.

D: Dave McIntosh, Dave Rave, who wrote that article from *Sounds from the Streets*, he was one of the first fanzine editors, and I met him at Start Dancing, and I remember coming up to him and saying, “I’m a writer,” and he was like, “Yeah? Prove it, kid,” and so I ended up writing for *Sounds from the Streets*. And then *The Nerve*, and one thing led to another, so the people that you would meet there, right, so,



sort of formed an influential little nucleus of people who would go on, like Vera with Amnesty, and make a huge impact in the Toronto music scene.

How often did the events happen? It sounds like they were weekly.

V: Yeah, we were on and off for about five years.

And was it every

Friday night, was that the idea?

V: Pretty much; as time went on, it maybe wasn’t as often because we’d always have to find a new hall ... eventually. [laughter]

D: From Coxwell to Clarendon.

M: It’s true though, ‘cause I remember Grade Twelve, basically every Friday night, I came home, my mom would cook me an early supper, and then Gerry would pick me up, we’d go pick up the equipment, and we’d set it up, and it was every Friday night.

G: And it was pretty neat. But we lost halls in great fashion.

I would think that high-school dances would happen on Friday, so it seemed to be structured in that same way, right?

G: Money-wise is why it ended up being on Friday night, because Saturday nights the halls were usually booked, and Friday nights you could get them cheaper, and that worked great because, you know, it just did.

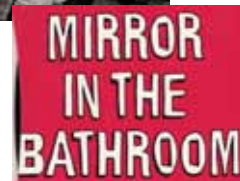
Where was the first one, do you remember?

V: It was on Ontario Street, the Legion Hall.

I think 389 or 386 Ontario Street?

V: I’m not sure if the night with the band was the first night or not; we had a few where there was just the DJ.

M: There was about four or five before we did the bands. ‘Cause I remember Andy Ford, from APB, he picked a bunch of us up, and we came down going, “we’re going to a mod dance.” I remember walking up the stairs and coming out, and my first impression was, “There’s girls





here.” ‘Cause, I mean, I was just this grubby punk rocker, and girls wouldn’t go anywhere near you and I walk out and there’s girls and plus they look good and it’s just like, “O.K., this is part of the agenda.” [laughter]

START

D: It was definitely part of it, wasn’t it?

V: So I know that when we first started it was kind of modeled on this idea of the church dances in Scarborough in the basement, that we can play music. We actually a lot of us met at different musical performances in Toronto. I can remember meeting a couple of people for the first time at like the ENGLISH BEAT or going to the MODS at the Edge or going to see L’ETRANGER, and there’d be different people that you’d meet, and you’d go, “Oh, you play music?” And I think a lot of us had also been to basement parties where a lot of the music had been played and you’re going, “This is the first time I’ve ever heard this band.” the CLASH, especially, very influential, we went to see them at O’Keefe Center, is that it, in ’79, and there was I don’t know how many of us were there, but that was one of the big things for me. I met about ten people who liked the same kind of music. So you know you’d come together through music, and then you’d get this chance. **Sometimes they lived out your way, too, because you were always taking the subway home and you’d see them.**

V: Yeah, or if the show went past one o’clock you’d be begging whoever had a car to drive you home.

M: I lived at Lawrence and Port Union, and that’s like almost Pickering, and I felt like I was the only punk rocker out there.

And around 1978 I was trying to start a punk band, and I was working at Ponderosa at the time, I was walking home with John convincing him to sing in my band, and I got to Ontario housing, which is like Lawrence/Morningside area, and I heard punk rock, and it was a party going on. I thought, “We’re going to this place,” and we walked

in – I think we were still in our Ponderosa outfits –and we go down there, and there’s all these like big hairy guys, and they look like bikers, and they

have swastikas drawn on their arms, and I’m going, “What the hell’s going on here?” And INSIDE OUT was playing, which was Steve Good, and Buzz and whatnot, and that’s where I met those guys. And I just introduced myself, and then somehow about a half a year later I heard they were playing battle of the bands and the rockers were gonna attack them, so we said, I got a whole bunch of people together ...

What school was this at?

M: ... this was at Thompson.

D: We did have to get the police in.

M: We were at Mowat. And I said, “There’s not going to be a fight; we’re not going to be a part of it,” ‘cause, literally, we picked up chains and knives and crowbars, and we said, “Fuck that, if there’s a fight, someone’s going to get it.” And



I remember we get there, and there’s cops all over the school, and we thought, “We can’t go in with this stuff,” so we hid it under a fir tree. And we went into the show, and I remember seeing Buzz so relieved when we all turned up, ‘cause there was about ten of us looking for a fight, and nothing happened. Someone threw a firecracker, and that was it, and that’s when I said to Buzz, “We’re your friends from now on.” And that’s it, and that’s how I met those guys.

D: I remember having to get escorted in and out of the school by police. And this was just over some music, and the size of the cuffs of your jeans, and your haircut.

That story’s telling about the times. I don’t think that’s so much irrelevant today, but it plays on my experience, too. I wanted

to ask you about 386 Ontario Street: where was that, ‘cause I’m trying to pin down some of the storytelling elements ...

D: Carleton and ...

V: It’s on the edge of Regent Park, next to the beer store. It’s an old Legion Hall.

Near Dundas? Dundas and Parliament area?

V: Uh, yes, at St. James, whatever the park is with the greenhouses across, kitty corner kind of, a little bit in sight of that. But I think Paul and I were living downtown at the time close by – we were at Wellesley and Jarvis – and that was a place. We had

looked about fifteen.

One of the QUARANTINE houses was



CHARLIE ANGUS, L'ETRANGER



around there?

V: I'm not sure. We were in a small, low-rise apartment with cockroaches, and that's about it, no furniture.

G: That wasn't the name of a band? [laughter]

No.

V: But we actually went into about ten different churches and places, and the Legion Hall was the first one that would actually let teenagers come in. So, I think they thought I was eighteen or nineteen, and I wasn't, but they let us book the hall, so a lot of the time was pretending you were older than you were. And I think we only had five shows there because after the band thing we always had trouble with people seeing kids, the punks, people with ripped shirts or with pins in them or something.

D: Fights.

G: There was fights, and that's how we would end up sometimes losing a place. I remember

actually in Claremont it was pretty damn exciting: it was a great place, but we actually got into an issue with a vehicle that decided to drive through the front door. It was a couple of

guys that were actually from the neighbourhood; they were a lot older, they were having a few drinks, and, from what I understand, they were looking to sell some dope to some of the guys, and some of the other guys were saying, "Why don't you just get the hell out of here?" – I don't think they used the word "hell," though – but the next thing I know, they were trying to flatten ...

someone took out a blade to flatten the guy's tire, and I stopped him, and I said, "Don't

do that." Then Vera called me to go and talk to the manager about paying the rent, and I said,

"I think I just have to go outside now," and by the time I got outside, the guy was ripping up and down, and – boy, it was right out of a movie – he was ripping up and down the road in his jacked-up Duster, two fellas, and they were kind of like rocker style of guys, they were about twenty one, and someone was pogoing on the top of their roof, and I looked at the side of the vehicle, and the boots had obviously visited the sides of the vehicle ...

M: Well, the whole time that was going on, my head was in the car, I was saying, "Guys, you gotta go – this is getting really bad, I can't stop these people. It's not like there's two angry people here – you have thirty people surrounding your car looking to do damage to it ..."

G: And they were trying to be cool about it ...

Trying to talk sense into them.

G: Yeah; at one point – it's a small, thin road – so I'm looking at him, and the tires by this point had ripped off, because he's in a fit of fury, ripping up and down the road now, and he's starting to do a three-point turn into wrought iron. We have our wrought-iron gates, and I immediately turned to Mark, and I said, "Mark, get everybody inside."

M: So, I'm standing in the path of the car, throwing people through the front door.

G: He's pushing them in, and I'm standing in front of the car, just because for some reason I thought I was Superman, and I was going to be able to stop this vehicle from driving over somebody.

It's good that they had the sense not to drive into somebody.

G: So, by the time he was able to get around, Mark was just pushing the last people through the front door. He floored it up through the thing, I was pinned up against the wrought-iron fence; I was lucky that I didn't die, and the car is literally ... I'm looking right in the guy's glazed eyes because he was so infuriated, and it was fantastic, really, because the front of the car hit this beautiful glass double-door window, and it just all came crashing down, and then he reversed it and took off. Sadly, Mark busted his



hand pretty bad, broke it, and there was another girl that actually I think something happened with her hip or something.

M: My hand was on her back, and the whole frame came down and hit her on the back of

the neck and everything, and she just hit the ground because of the frame and everything. She was in the hospital for quite some time.

G: He went to jail, and it was ...

M: I went to court a lot.

G: Yeah, you and I. But, interestingly enough, though, right after it happened, I remember Vera walked up to me, and she says, "Aw, Gerard, I think we lost the club again."

I was going to say, is this the last time you played this club?

G: No. This is what I did: I went up to this manager, who was in shock, he was walking up the stairs looking at everything, and I started yelling at him. I said, "If you can't give me a fuckin' safe place for my kids to dance, I'm not gonna be here next week!"

And he was totally confused, and I started yelling at him, and I said, "You've got weird neighbours in this place; they're strange people." He eventually apologized, and we were fine. So we kept the place that week, but I think it was about two or three weeks later, someone got into a fight with someone else, and ...

V: We actually ran into a thing of some kids showing up with swastikas, and I know that's been an issue at a lot of punk things, and we said, "No: don't wear them; you shouldn't be wearing them." And they're going, "It's our freedom: we have the right to express ourselves."

G: Yeah, "And it's our freedom not to let you in."

V: But it was a Jewish temple, the Desh Bhagat Temple ...

I was going to ask where this was 'cause I lived actually on Crocker really close to there, so this is near Trinity-Bellwood – Claremont is just two streets over, right?

V: I guess just north of Queen on Claremont.

Yeah, west of Bathurst, east of Ossington.

D: I think it's five blocks west of Bathurst.

V: And you have a person who's actually lived through and relatives that have gone through the Second World War, dealing with young punks who are thinking it's really cool to have "freedom of expression," and that's where it clashes. And I know L'ETRANGER and the DEAD KENNEDYS ran into a problem with people wearing swastikas at the show and it being a big deal ...

That was even in the L'ETRANGER video,



they had a poster over top of a swastika in the market, that was part of one of their videos.

V: Yeah, for "One People." So, we did run into politics a lot, because when you have freedom of speech, you have people who want to say a lot of different things.

G: And unfortunately, though, at the same time, a lot of these guys that were wearing swastikas: they didn't even know: they just thought it was cool to look like a rebel and have a swastika 'cause they think of the biker image and all of that, and a lot of them didn't know really what they were actually advertising. Nevertheless, because someone said to you, "Don't do that," they said, "Now I'm going to."

There was a history for it, too, with the VILETONES and Nazi Dog and all that stuff, right, in Toronto?

M: They were just copying Sid Vicious, which is a pretty sad reason to do that.

G: It was a fashion – a bad fashion statement, if anything.

M: One funny story about the night the door got crashed in, 'cause I spent most of that night in the cop station and the rest of it in the hospital, and I remember being driven home in the cop car yet again. [laughter] I used to live three doors up from

the Cregans from BARENAKED LADIES, I used to babysit those kids, and it seemed like whenever I got pulled home in a cop car they were on their way to church. And it would always be the same thing: the parents driving by really quick and these little three white noses pressed against the glass seeing me getting pulled in by the cops again, and I can always see those faces. So that's why I could never get into BARENAKED LADIES: I always saw the little white noses seeing me get pulled into the house [laughter]. G: But with that incident, though, I did a pre-emptive strike where I actually went to the police department months before it happened to let them know that we were running a club because I said, "We got a youth club, we want you to know about us, what we're doing, we look a little bit different," and I got along with the community officer really well, and, so ...

That's unusual. Community officers are usually the friendly people, but ...

G: ... then we had two inspectors show up, and that was a fun night, and me and Mark were just laughing about this, where they thought, "There's no way someone is running some club for youth, and there's not alcohol or drugs involved."

They expected the worst.

G: So they come and checked out one of the bars, open it up, and we had fine quality pop, didn't we? We had all sorts of flavours from the Pop Shoppe – we were a regular customer of theirs – and they went through the fridge and they see nothing, and I said to them, "Look, I got a bar on the other side. Would you like to look at that?" And they go, "Yeah," so two of

them go over and they go through that, and I said, "I also have a kitchen in the back here. You guys want to check that out, too?" So at this point they're a little confused. They go in and look around the kitchen.

To gain their trust, right?

G: Yeah, so I said, "Would you guys like a cup of tea?"

And I made them a

cup of tea, and I said, "Were you guys really expecting to see something here? Do you not realize?" – and I took out the community officer's business card – "I've been there, I told you guys about us, and that's why you got this call." So





HANGING OUTSIDE OF THE YOUNG LIONS GARAGE

then they were real cool, they actually started laughing, had their tea, and moved on. And it was really good that you got together with them, because when that incident happened, we, at least the management of the club, were the good guys, and it really was youth. Now, the fact that the laneways were in the back were actually our bars was a whole other story, and maybe one of you guys want to fill us in on that. [silence]

D: No. [laughter]

V: I just know that there was a lot of people that weren't drinking, and that's cool. I know myself I wasn't a big drinker, I was there for the music, and I know we used to sometimes charge \$2.50 to get in, and one day I heard somebody selling pills behind me for \$2.50, so as somebody walked by I gave them change, and then I'd hear the exchange.

G: We dealt with that, though.

V: I do know who it is, but I won't mention his name. He worked at a record store. An independent one. In Toronto.

G: One of the guys, who's a friend of yours, a tall fella that was always there with us – and I'm killing myself trying to remember his name – and he was quiet. I think he came in from Vancouver, something like that. Anyway, he had an issue where he had friends that had gotten sick from drugs. He pointed out this guy to me, and I said, "Well, let's go into the washroom and

have a discussion with him there." And so we did, and he never came back. So that was the end of that. I remember there were some kids who got really sick because of some drugs that were being sold, and we just didn't want any of that here. In the laneways, there was kids that put a bottle or something and stashed it and they'd have a drink and they'd come back in, and I remember going and checking the laneways and usually saying, "Be quiet, don't make any noise, and don't break any bottles." And then it made sense to them. And this was a Portuguese neighbourhood with a lot of nice families around, and actually, for a pile of punks, we're extremely well behaved, so it was good.

We've talked about some of the bands already, like V-NECKS and YOUTH

YOUTH YOUTH.

Can you tell me about the YOUNG LIONS? What were they like?

V: I met them at – I think they were doing a band-rehearsal party on Ashdale, they were living near Coxwell and Gerrard, and they were friends of, I think,

Phil? Maybe? Who was in L'ETRANGER, and we went to a party, heard them play. And at the time I sort of saw them as early Clash, and they

spoke like Joe Strummer a little bit, and I'm going, "O.K., these guys are cool." That's what I know of them, and, as I said, I'm a fan, like I just wanted to hear them play. So I had seen them doing some rehearsal stuff at the house there, I think, and I'm going, "O.K. you guys are great," and that's how I met them. I don't know about the rest of you.

D: They were so bad-ass, weren't they? [laughter] There weren't many bands at that time that just had that swagger, and a bit before their time, you know? Just really, really, bad – I'm just looking at their picture there.

Yeah, they were. And they were a three-piece, too, right? And so was L'ETRANGER.

M: L'ETRANGER were a three piece at the time.

V: Three piece and four, because Phil was the fourth.

M: I think it was also the time, because the first punk bands had sort of come and gone and really left no mark: they were so busy fighting amongst themselves, they accomplished nothing, you know, and they really haven't changed in thirty-something years. And the next wave ...

The next wave was trying to make a difference.

M: ... some of them were old-school punks, some of them were, like, really weird new wave, some you just never knew, and I was amazed – Vera would get tapes sometimes of bands, and they'd just be rehearsal tapes, you'd hear it and go, "I've never heard anything like that before" – so the fact that Vera would say, "Come and

play a show," I thought was amazing.

G: By the way, that's called a "cassette tape," that is no longer in the *Webster's Dictionary*.

Is that right?

G: They removed it.

[Pedantic editorial note: Around the

time of this interview, *The Huffington Post* erroneously reported the deletion of "cassette tape" by *The Concise Oxford English Dictionary*. That dictionary (not to be confused with *The Oxford English Dictionary*, which does not delete words) removed "cassette player" but not "cassette tape" from its most recent edition.]

D: Mark's band – MARK MALIBU AND THE WASAGAS – this is like a teenage surf band in 1981, a punk/surf band, and the list of those bands at the time was not endless, was it? There weren't that many teenage surf bands in North America.

Actually, Andy or Buzz was talking about it, saying that you pre-dated bands like SHADOWY MEN FROM A SHADOWY



PLANET. No disrespect to them, but you pre-dated them.

M: We pre-dated everybody. Two years after that it became big with the MILKSHAKES and whatnot in England, but, literally, *Smash* fanzine did a cassette and we were on it, and the *New Music Express* reviewed every single band on it except for us.

No way.

M: No one was interested in the surf instrumental, and I was into it 'cause I was a record collector, and record collectors were old dudes, and weird dudes buying like Bruce Springsteen live bootlegs – you know, “you gotta get the Friday night show, not the Saturday night show because of the sax solo in the fourth set blahblahblah” – I used to buy weird ‘sixties music, and I loved instrumentals, so we started the band. And there was really nothing like it, and there was nowhere to play, no one would ... like, what were we? We weren’t a new wave band, we weren’t a punk band, we weren’t anything, so at least this was like our first gigs downtown, not like a house party in Scarborough.

And you had the Wasaga reference. That was our closest thing to a surf.

M: Exactly. ‘Cause the band started actually in 1979, I was getting sick of punk rock and started putting it together, and it was hard to put together a band like that.

Yeah yeah, for sure: who else would be playing it? How did you convince people to play it?

M: No one. I was always the instigator: “Play in my band or don’t play in a band.” I think a lot of people were getting sick of punk rock by about 1980, so it was a good chance to try something different.

V: That’s true, that’s the thing where I would say that the diversity, and also the whole thing with the fanzines, people who wrote fanzines would approach me with tapes and things, and it’s funny, all you guys have very specific memories: mine are very vague because I’d just go, “Wow, that’s really cool, let’s try it.” You know, and so a lot of things would be one contact with a person once for ten minutes: they’d drop off a tape at the door.

G: “Fanzines” was a thing before a thing called the internet. Just to let you guys know how people communicated.

M: When you think about people in the scene, everyone was an instigator of whatever they were interested in, if they were interested in music, photography ... anything, like writing, you just went ahead ... you didn’t say, “I need permission, or I need a government grant.” You just went off and did it. And I think, as you see people from our scene, we’re all successful in

YOUNG LIONS



our industries now, 'cause we're instigators and we're organizers.

G: That is so true, that's really neat: when you think of all the people that were at Start Dancing, and when I look back at guys like Andy Ford, who got involved in TV, and yourselves, and I was very

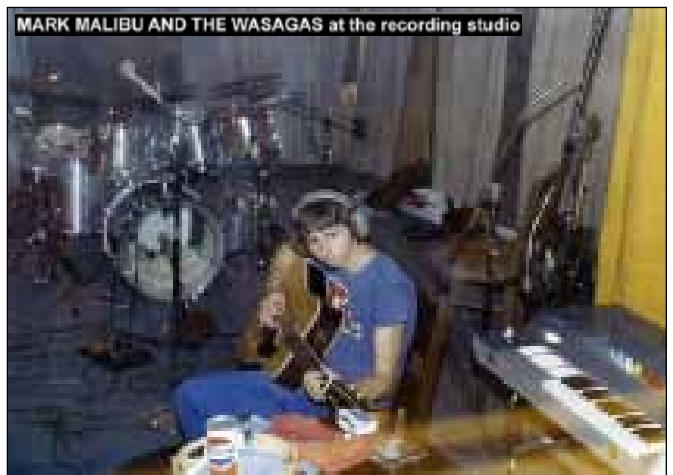
too much these days, and it doesn't allow people to learn by creating mistakes and giving them the opportunity to actually try something. And it seems like the punk scene in that era was a perfect generator, a petrie dish, for people to explore.

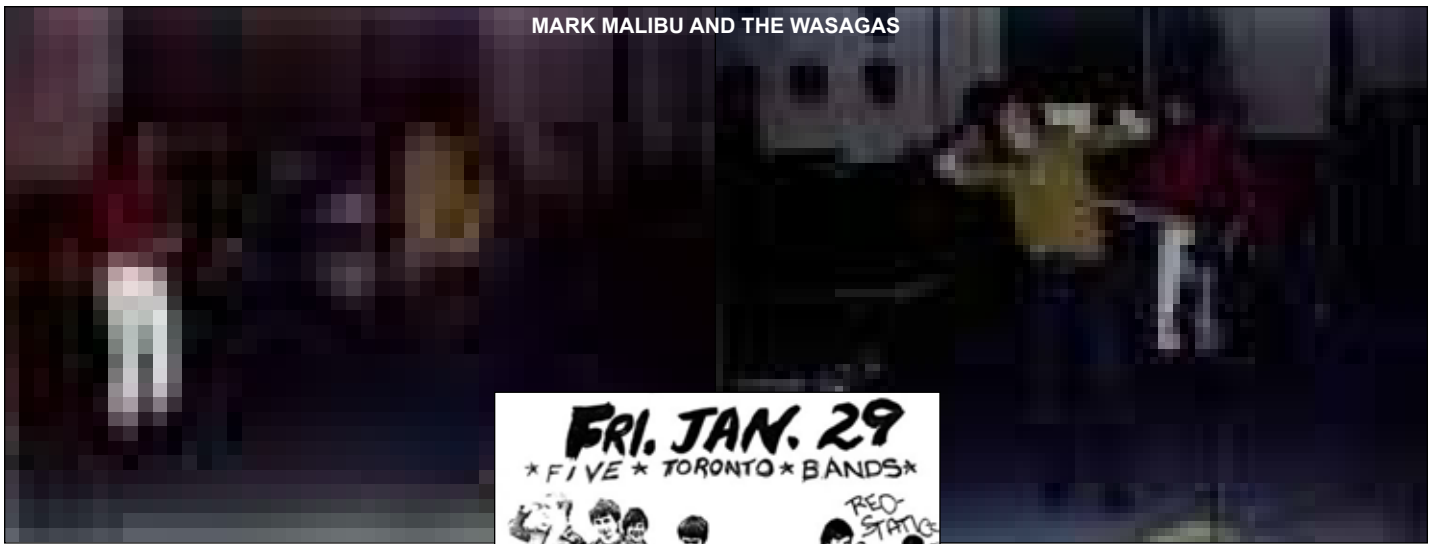
D: It was DIY, wasn't it, and sort of guerilla marketing. I remember going to the BEAT concert at the Concert Hall with about two-hundred flyers that I'd made and just throwing them off the balcony during the show, so the whole BEAT concert it just rained down and we had to duck and hide behind people 'cause the cops and security wanted to ... so, yeah, it really was DIY.

G: Talk about the guerilla marketing more, 'cause that was all we had except this one thing that we had started doing: I wanted to try and get some major news about the club, because I thought it was really good, and at the time the only radio station that was even remotely into that was CFNY. And I took a calendar, and over six weeks I had different people at different times call one particular DJ and say, “Do you

lucky, I've been building sound systems for top pros for the last thirty years now, so I was just very lucky. But I just found that the group of people there were really smart and really wanting to move forward and were open-minded, and I think we were talking earlier about having punks and mods and whatever together people into ska et cetera. It didn't matter because everyone was open-minded, and I think there's a fair amount of respect for different thoughts, and when you have that kind of a character, you go into the world and take it on, and bring it all in and make the best of things.

I heard an interview where we structure play





MARK MALIBU AND THE WASAGAS



know where Start Dancing is?" And then I called him up and said, "Look, my name's Gerry Doyle and I'd like to know if you'd like to talk about our club, Start Dancing." He almost jumped through the phone and says, "I've been looking for you guys," and then they did a really great story on it, and it was a whole lot of fun, and we got a whole lot of extra people to come out that following Friday night, so it was fun.

Yeah, 'cause if you were into punk you'd be listening to that station.

G: Yeah, and I specifically – I'm trying to remember his name – and there was one particular DJ that played that kind of music, and it was appropriate for us, and he was the right guy to promote it. But also the flyers: that was giant for us. Putting up flyers on all the posts and everything like that, and some of the flyers that you've got in front of you here, I thought, these guys put them all together, which is really great, and ...

There's great pictures of bands of the time, like this one from November 27 – you were reminiscing outside of who all is in the shot – you can actually see some of the people who were part of the scene, being put up on street poles.

G: Street posts, exactly, and that's how people found us, through street posts, through whatever we could do ...

And kids at the time would go, "I look like that, I identify with that."

M: It's funny: there's a picture of the GOOD



GUYS there, and Reid Diamond from SHADOWY MEN was in that band, and I remember he came up to me and he said, "I've always wanted to do a surf instrumental band, and then you fuckers did it." He goes, "I was really hoping that you guys were gonna suck, but you don't, so now I'm even angrier!" Years later, he called me up, he goes, "We're doing our first, we're playing in the window at the Rivoli, come and see us." So I went down to the Rivoli, and three guys were in the window of the Rivoli with one speaker hanging outside. And he goes, "What did you think?" And I said, "Well, you were better than we were; you guys can play."

G: Everyone was so young, and the playing wasn't absolutely great, but the spirit and the energy ...

More than made up for it.

G: Well, that's why I loved it. I had one side of me which was all the professional people I was working with and then the bands that were there and just playing for the sake of music – you can't beat that. It was so fantastic to see people play, and, really, with all of their heart, and then the people coming to it, enjoying it, it really was a magical time.

Now we're starting to talk a bit about legacy, I'm thinking that the RHOEOSTATICS were one of the first bands. Were they considered a punk band at the time?

D: No.

V: But they were definitely in the punk scene, playing in punk bars and on punk bills with other bands.

There's this flyer here for January 29, which is in 1982, where you were at the Claremont space, and the RHOEOSTATICS were on this bill. They're playing with YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH, and I'm thinking ... how often did that ever happen?

G: With us, all the time.

D: It'd already veered off. We all know what the RHOEOSTATICS became, this huge, sort of soaring art rock, but even back then they'd already veered off. They were already starting to experiment back then, I remember. We were talking about Dave Rave, the fanzine editor, one Friday night he came in with an ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN single, and he said,

"Put this on," and I was just completely blown away. Mark was talking about reacting to punk rock by 1980, he was sort of bored of it, and the way that Liverpool reacted to punk rock, which was to put on a long, black leather coat and get weird, and get psychedelic, right? And the first time I heard

that single that Dave had bought at the Record Peddler on the Saturday before, it just blew my mind.

I try to think back to some of that stuff. I remember when Steve Leckie was here, he was talking about the day that Sid Vicious died, and he said that it had an effect on the punk scene, that basically the old-school punks thought that punk was dead, and they had to reinvent themselves, and so rockabilly and all these other things started coming in.





SHADOWY MEN ON A SHADOWY PLANET at the Rivoli



But I think there was another generation of punks that were coming up who wanted to be a part of it, and they weren't accepted by that first wave, and they just said, "We're just doing it." They didn't pay attention to the acceptance or the non-acceptance, they were just, "We're punks," right? And started expressing themselves in different ways, and I think that while punk was reinventing itself, the first wave, it had a different effect on the next generation, taking that diversity and expressing themselves in different ways, and you've got all these explosions of these different styles of punk that grew out of it.

M: Well, I used to go to England every summer and see my grandparents and live there for the summer, and I remember the summer of '77, when I was probably about twelve or something then, punk was exploding there, but you were already getting guys from the original scene, from '75, saying "Punk's dead."

G: Crucial lag across the ocean.

The cultural dialogue is slower.

M: But to me, the trip to England every summer was to buy music. I was really into SWEET and David Bowie and ROXY MUSIC, so there was this other stuff, and what you could hear then was BOOMTOWN RATS and ELVIS COSTELLO. You couldn't find a SEX PISTOLS record if you tried.

G: Well, talk about cassettes, I had my cousin, I find this out later, but my cousin actually managed the BOOMTOWN RATS, and the

song "Harry Hooper" was him, and that was his nickname, and so I got a cassette with the BOOMTOWN RATS ...

That's the first show I ever saw, I went to see them at Seneca College: that's the first punk show I ever went to see.

G: ... and that was pretty neat, and we had that on cassette, which is this thing that ... never mind ... but we had a lot of cassettes and a lot of cassettes being brought back from ...

They were cheaper, too, right? In some ways, I think they were like \$3 or something, and singles were that, and you could probably get more songs on a cassette, and certainly in the local scene they became a way of doing smaller runs.

M: Cassettes were for taping other people's albums.

That too. You could certainly fit more songs on a cassette.

M: It was before MP3s and digital downloading, we stole them ...

Same idea, those digital downloads sort of

took that idea, in some ways.

M: I remember a friend of mine saying to me once, "It's weird, I'm getting into punk rock now in 1984, and people are telling me I'm wrong," and I'm like, "who gives a ..." Find the music: if it means something to you, that's fine. All this, "I was here before you," it doesn't matter. You'll find the people that were maybe the early adopters of punk-rock ... I think of some of my friends that were so punk rock but they wore suits to school. It was more an attitude, and it was all the idiots that would turn up in leather jackets and try to look like Sid Vicious. They weren't punks, they were loogans.



G: And that's what I'm saying, is that music ... it doesn't matter when or whatever: if you enjoy it, if it means something to you, fantastic. Can you imagine a punk band back then that was also a vegetarian band? And I believe you guys have got a band coming up from California ... I'm trying to remember the name of it ...

M: The ROTTEN VEGETABLES.

G: That sounds like a great name. But we're seeing punk nowadays, and who is anyone to say, "Oh, that's not real punk: real punk had to happen in the 'seventies or early 'eighties," and therefore it doesn't matter. No: it continues.

I think the torch is still there and the spirit is still alive and well.

G: Absolutely. And even if it's a new torch – fine. Enjoy the music. At the end of the day, that's what it's about.

And I think, with successive generations of punk, it's also dug its heels in deeper and also dug its heels in different ways to have more fun, too; there's just different ways it's trying to be true to the spirit.

M: I think there's a lot of rules now.

[A nerve is touched: three people speak simultaneously.]

I think there's certain blueprints to follow ...

G: Well, I mean, when SUM 41 ...

... you don't have to make the same mistakes, you can at least look back and see where at least some of these things are done, and you can go, "Yeah, I love that influence: I'm going to take that," some examples ...

G: Well, someone referred to SUM 41 as a punk band, to which I'm kind of going, "really?"

But there's less examples back then, right? So I think there was more ... you had to figure it out.

M: Well, for us, DEVO and the B-52s were punk rock.

V: BLONDIE.

M: Now, they would be like next to Lady Gaga.

G: Yes, BLONDIE.

V: They were seen as "new wave" or whatever.

G: Well, she was doing hip hop back then; reggae, hip hop ...

Yeah, "The Tide is High," with calypso.

G: ... and there was a good example of a band that gave itself no borders, but yet the music was all there.



BLONDIE at Seneca College, 1977
Photo by John Catto

V: I just wanted to say something: I think that punk – the idea of people being able to do what matters to them – is the whole idea of what I thought Start Dancing was. And, I'm a teacher now, and I was just recently down at the "Me to We" concert with kids, and, I don't know if you guys have heard of this, but one of their big slogans is for kids to take a talent that they have and a cause that they care about and do something.

M: Yeah, my daughter was involved in that last year.

V: 100% reminded me of Start Dancing. And it was very funny to get the request for this interview after just going as a forty-eight-year-old teacher downtown with a bunch of twelve-and-thirteen-year-olds.

G: Listen to her: she's left her walker outside.

D: Wow – 48!

G: You're always young.

V: And the kids say to me, "Could we organize a dance?" to raise money for famine relief in Africa, and I'm going, "I've been here before." **I can show you how to do this.**

V: So it's really cool, and we've got bands at our school, kids that are starting, and I think it's that idea of taking a cause and something you're good at and doing something with it, and I was good at organizing, and I loved all these bands, so it was like, "O.K., I'll organize this, and I get to see the bands." So I think that it lives on.

G: Yeah, the spirit of the place stayed with us. I myself in my factory built a recording studio for youth, which is free of charge, if kids do a few hours of community service, I'll record them for free.

Mark was telling me about this, this is also incredible.

G: It's called The Light of DAE – by the way, if any of your listeners, any young musicians out there want to be part of it, it's Light of DAE, d-a-e ...

So basically you can dock hours by doing community service.

G: Yeah, and it's not an hourly thing. I'll

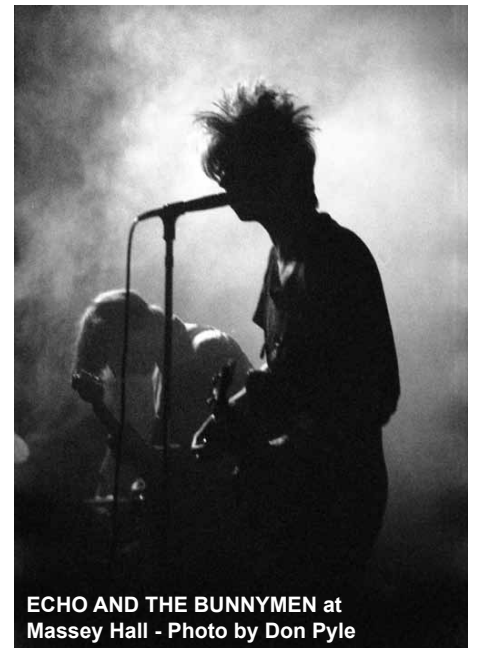
explain: what I do is say to young people, "Go out and do something for your community." And their first question is, "How much time for how many hours in the recording studio?"

And I says, "There is none. You go and do something, you videotape it so we can put it up on YouTube and show by example you caring for your community, and do something cool and inspire me and I'll give you as much time as you need." And suddenly ...

It's a great idea.

G: ... it takes away from the monetary or quantifiable thing and goes back to the spirit which was very much the beginning here for us with Start Dancing. So I think Start Dancing has affected all of us throughout our lives, and it was really cool. One of the things that I wanted to do with the studio was not only teach youth to share but I also wanted to teach corporations to share, so I went up to a lot of them and I said, "Give me gear, and if you do, I'll tell everybody; and if you don't, I'll tell everybody. **"Your reputation's on the line here."**

G: And the Canadian music industry that supplies equipment for our industry, frankly, God bless them, they stepped up – they really did – Sennheiser gave us all the microphones we needed, they continue to – you'll like



ECHO AND THE BUNNYMEN at Massey Hall - Photo by Don Pyle

this – we just got a couple of new Neumann microphones given to us by them. A Soundcraft board made in England just showed up on our docks – "There you go" – so we got a lot of really great equipment. A lot of people knew what it was I was trying to do, and the idea is just to try a from "Me to We" kind of thing, and I guess I got into that a decade ago when I started the youth studio. Again, it's all about paying it forward, about caring and also feeling good about what you're doing; it's fun to share and care with other people, and if a young person gets a chance to experience that, it's gonna stay with them, just like the spirit of Start Dancing I think has stayed with all of us.

M: We should talk more about some of the bands, because it's amazing, we've only talked about the bands on the posters ...

I did want to ask you about bands like the RENT BOYS: who were they? Can you tell



BOOMTOWN RATS

us about them because we've talked a little bit about Dave Rave and some other people, but tell me about who the RENT BOYS were 'cause they had a sort of reputation.

M: I'm still friends with Nick White. I think he's going to move back to Toronto, I met with him this summer. Nick started what I would consider one of the longest-running fanzines in Toronto at the time, it was called *Smash It Up*, and he started that around 1979.

His cassette comps sound amazing. Did they have lots of local bands on them?

M: It was only local, it was the Ontario area. His fanzines went on to like about twenty five, and then he started doing the cassettes. I think he did about three or four cassettes; I lost my cassettes, and he gave me some the last time he was in town, but I don't think it was any of the ones I was on, unfortunately. But he was great.

Has anyone ever thought about trying to digitize these to make them available? Because there's an archive there that might be lost with the switch from analogue to digital.

M: I have every single *Smash* fanzine at home, I've got a lot of the Toronto fanzines at home in a Tupperware container ...

Start scanning, or send them to me ...

M: ... so I have all those, and we were talking about doing a documentary on fanzines, but as you approach everyone, everyone's pissed off and bitter about the scene. They stopped doing it because in the early days they used to go and they would interview U2, and take pictures; then, the next thing you know, people are saying, "If you don't have an official press pass, you can't take pictures, and there's no interviewing the bands unless you're from a registered newspaper." So they just said, "If this is what the scene's turned into, fuck you." And they stopped. But Nate was the percussionist, and it was Howard Zephyr on sax and Brat X on bass. They were a five piece, they were totally ad lib, they worked out their music over time, and they went from just being crazy sort of Queen Street artists to really having a style – remember, they had all the camouflage netting and stuff – and then they moved across to England with Dave Howard. They did an album with Dave Formula from *MAGAZINE*. So



that was one of the bands; they were totally different, and I think they were like PIGBAG, that's the best comparison.

D: Yeah, or almost like GANG OF FOUR, even from the name, I mean, what a name for a band, that was just sort of their declaration of intent, but very sort of funky and so out there man for that time, really incredible.

M: Do you remember the band EBS? EBS played once: it was a singer, a bass player ...

I've never heard of this band.

M: ... EBS were a band, they were like JOY DIVISION, so there was like a drummer, a bass player, a guitar player who played through his Roland SH-2001, and a singer. And I remember Vera gave me the tape, and I refused to give it back, and I kept it for years, and I don't know if it got anywhere but it was so good: "I love these guys, they're so different." And FIFTH COLUMN played.

V: I remember they had a tiny tiny little

keyboard that the one lady was playing, and it was a white plug-in, almost like an accordion.

M: It was Caroline Azar, I fell in love with her that night, and we're still friends. They looked like witches: they had long hair down to their waist and it was black and they were dressed like witches. They were just the most incredible odd band, and I don't know how good they could play but I never heard anything like it again.

V: We mentioned YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH, and Rob Mallion – who did a lot of the writing, a lot of political lyrics, very interesting – and Brian? Was the front guy?

M: There was two ...

I have to say, I did an interview with Rob Mallion many years back, and he was in our discussion when we started talking about Start Dancing that I said, "I really need to find some of these people," and when I met Mark, he said, "I was involved with Start

Dancing," it was like, "You're the person I've been looking for for years."

M: And we've been dating ever since. [laughter]

But Rob Mallion still continues





to champion Start Dancing.

D: Well, he was one of those guys who would come every week and just stand at the front door and talk to you all night long. And Rob's a guy who started his first band, a punk band in 1978 and he was fifteen, and people said – what we were talking about – he was too far behind the times. He missed the boat.

That's bullshit.

D: He was telling me a few weeks ago ...

I listen to YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH records, and I still think how far forward they are, like there's still nobody who really comes close to how they ...

G: If you think back to how music was played back then, you could almost play it today.

I do.

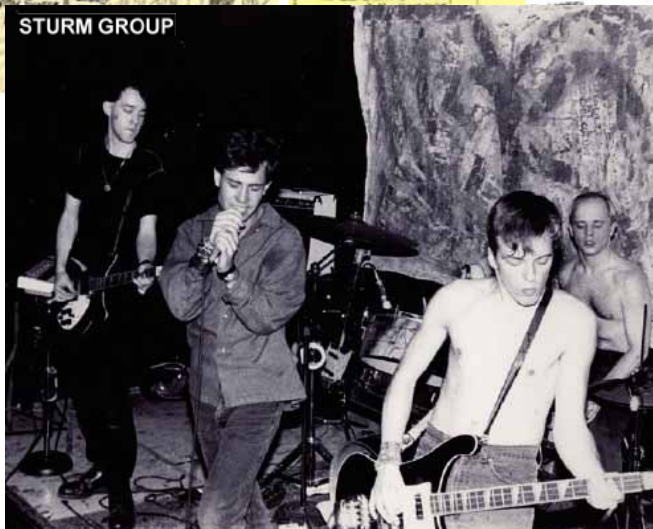
G: When I think of the protests that are going on now on Bay Street and on Wall Street, and you could play the JAM behind all of it.

M: But YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH were easily the best hardcore band Canada's ever seen, better than D.O.A.; I saw D.O.A. the first few times they came here.

Easily. I would say that easily.

M: And to see their show. 'Cause when we played, you don't know who's turning up, they got up on stage and started playing, and I was going, "Oh, these guys are so awesome." And even when they opened up for the DEAD KENNEDYS: DEAD KENNEDYS were amazing, but YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH were easily as good, they just didn't have the legendary status. But that's the night I went home, I said, "Punk's over for me." It was weird: it was like this great show – it was L'ETRANGER, it was YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH, it was the DEAD KENNEDYS, it was people flying off the second balcony, it was just chaos – and I went home going "It's all downhill from here."

You're never going to see anything as good as this.



M: Yeah.

V: I would say that's one of the bands I remember most.

YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH?

G Me too.

V: Yeah, the thing for me was I'd missed the PISTOLS, I wasn't old enough to go to their show.

Me neither.

V: So I missed that, but when you get this coming to Toronto, when you get a band that has the same energy and that same sense of anger, I think that anger against things that you couldn't stop ...

It seemed like a doubling down of resolve, right? The punk scene didn't promise, [but the hardcore scene said.] "We're gonna promise, we're gonna try to deliver on that promise." A little bit, right? There was sort of an attention to do a little bit better, in the hardcore scene, right?

M: Well, I can remember Brian doing sound for MARK MALIBU AND THE WASAGAS when we played at the Drake once. We got there, it was us and the RHEOSTATICS playing, there

was a sound board, and there was no one. And Brian turns up, and I go, "Do our sound?" and he goes, "Sure," and he just dropped everything and did the sound. Those were the sort of guys they were, and it was not like, "Oh, I'm a big rock star"; it was like, "Sure, I've got nothing to do tonight." And there he was, and a lot of people were like that. Bands would turn up and have broken strings, broken

straps, things weren't working, and everybody shared. There was no competition: everyone wanted to see everyone succeed.

G: That's a good word for it, too, the whole word is "share."

It was a modus operandi for making it work.

G: It's just the way things worked.

We've talked a lot about some of these great bands that grew out of Start Dancing, and I would say that Start Dancing had a big role to play in giving them a stage and also

finding out about each other and then allowing them to develop as bands, but I also think there was a literary scene that grew up around Start Dancing, which we started talking about with *Smash it Up*.

G: A lot of fanzines.

Rob did a zine called *Civil Disobedience*: can you tell me about it? *Smash it Up* had twenty-five?

M: They had about twenty-five paper issues and about three or four cassettes. *Civil Disobedience*: I have a few of those, I think he did about three or four. *Sounds from the Streets* got to about eight or nine. There was *Hide*.





Youth Youth Youth live at the Upper Lip, which was the same location as the riot.



Rob and Bryan on a rooftop with the anarchy symbol in the background.

D: *Revolution Rock* you're forgetting about.

Revolution Rock, what was that about?

M: I have a copy of that.

D: Thanks, Mark. I was the editor.

M: I'll sell it to you if you don't. But there was *The Next Big Thing*, and there was This Tiny Donkey, there was so many ... *Scrick*, Deanna from *Scrick* [sp?] ...

Can you tell me about This Tiny Donkey? You told me there was this group of people that were behind it.

M: Four of them, his name was Grant or Graham, I think it was Grant [Grant Heaps], and he's now the head costumer over at the National Ballet, I see him occasionally. It was him, and I thought it was his girlfriend, but apparently not. There were two guys and two girls that were very closely knit, and I think they were from some high school very close to me out in Scarborough. And theirs was sort of a cross ... it was a weird fanzine, 'cause Grant was such a fan of Tiny Tim, so there would be all this Peter Sellers-Tiny Tim, and then punk rock. And I felt *Scrick* was one of the better fanzines: Deanna was always around, and she took a lot of great photos.

Who was she? Was she involved in Fifth Column? No, Hide ...

M: No, *Hide* was Fifth Column, and that was an art zine: it had poetry, and they were really into gaycore or the homocore or whatever it's called, so there would be poetry to that effect and stories, it could be short stories. It was in the real sense of a zine where it was multimedia. Deanna – do you remember her? she was really a nice Asian girl, had glasses – but her fanzines were probably amongst the



multimedia. *Sounds from the Streets* were sort of rough and tumble, just like Dave McIntosh was: "Oh, they were bloody good!" or "Oh, they were bloody awful!" and "bloody" this and bloody that.

He did a whole thing on zines and he wrote – you mentioned more than the ones he covered – but there's one called *Animal Reflex* that [...] did. Did you know about that one?

M: That was just one issue. The early fanzines were like *T.O. '84* and *The Pig Paper*, I have a lot of those.

Yeah, Gary Gold did those.

M: Have you met Gary Pig at all?

Yeah, sure, he came in and did an interview with us, and we helped him unload an archive of all his stuff.

M: Gary started doing that in 1975, and he was just sort of an old guy, and he was into Merseybeat and 'sixties stuff. And as a lot of us transitioned from 'sixties music and the WHO, he got into punk because it was a similar type of music. You could find *The Pig Papers* in the record stores on Yonge Street, which is where I first found



fanzines.

D: If you wanted to interview the bands – I interviewed DEXY's, anything, ENGLISH BEAT – you went to the sound check, stuck your foot in the door, saw someone in the band,



ROB MALLION

told them who you were, what you wanted to do, and they were like, "Yeah, come on in, no problem."

They were open to it.

D: Now it is so tightly controlled and so corporate, you couldn't get near an established band.

G: That is so, so true, and you really don't know what the band is thinking because, unfortunately, there's so much money around it that at the end of the day, it's management and it's the production and the label that controls the hall that paid for it. And the first thing they do is buy security, and security doesn't let anyone in unless they say O.K., so getting through to bands and communicating with them nowadays compared to back then is just a world of difference. And I think there's probably a lot of bands out there today that would be really great to talk to, that would really care a great deal, but they've got this wall of management in front of them, whereas back then, you could walk in and talk to anyone like you were saying. It was a good time to be together with people.

I know management is supposed to be an organizing structure, but it seems to have been an obstacle or a hurdle in every aspect of punk.



M: I think music or entertainment in general it's easy – Dan and I work in the entertainment business now – and generally when you contact management the easiest answer is “No.” So you need to have some sort of foot in the door.

Dan's working for George Stroumboulopoulos: so that's a nice foot in the door. I'm different, because I produce movies, my foot in the door is I'm the financing, so then they want to listen to you.

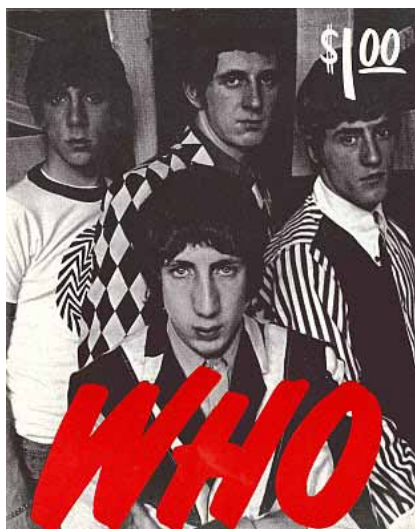
G: We've learned what words to drop. Like my line is real simple: “I won't turn the P.A. on.” So they go, “O.K., you're in.”

I want to ask about some more of these places, because we've only talked about two places, the Ontario Street one and the Claremont

Street. There was a Legion Hall, I understand, around Gerrard and Sherbourne? Is that the same as the Ontario Street?

V: That was Ontario Street.

M: That's the Legion Hall I remember that we brought down the roof. Remember there was two levels, and we were on the top level, and whoever I used to DJ with, we would always whip them into a frenzy, so I only did about an hour a night, and we would always play COCKNEY REJECTS. So I remember we had this one set, it was the SPECIALS, it was something stompy, “The Concrete Jungle,” and then it was the BEAT, “Mirror in the Bathroom.”



Then we did something else, and the next thing you know there's this huge commotion at the entrance, and I look and there's all these old guys in their Legion outfits covered in white dust, and apparently people were stomping so hard on the floor it brought the ceiling down. They were practicing some little marchy-marchy thing for their Legion, so there's all these old guys from World War II throwing punches at punk rockers and mods and we're all going, “No, we don't want to fight you, you're old dudes.”

[laughter] It was just crazy. I thought, “Great – we brought down the house!” And that was our last night there.

V: For a long time we were near Sherbourne and Gerrard, the north side, we were in two churches, Sacré Coeur, the French one, and then a little church beside it, and that's actually

where L'ETRANGER played in '84 and we were interviewed by Greg Quill there. And I remember it was one of our nights with two or three-hundred people, and it was just an old church basement there ... and I'm trying to think what the actual church was ... but we moved to several different places. We were in the Latvian Hall on College Street there for YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH.

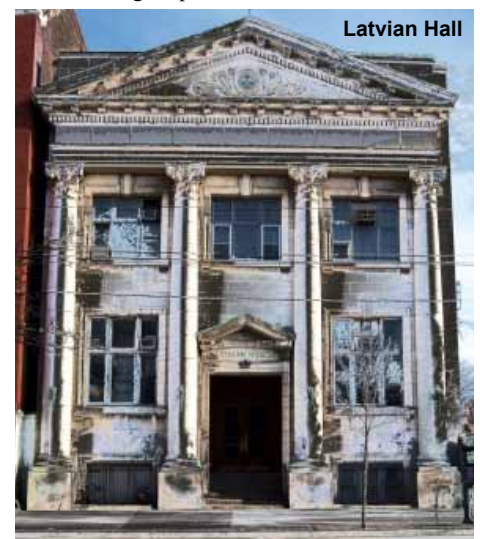
Oh! I remember seeing some hardcore shows there a few years later, like SNFU, so I think Start Dancing probably broke that place in for the punk scene.

V: Well, it's funny because we did about four shows

there and then one night we were there at the same time as a Latvian wedding, and there were people trying to serve ... I could smell the delicious food coming out of the kitchen, and we're sitting there ... and that was the night that we had five bands and YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH was one of them and it was really loud, really impressive music for a wedding going on next door in the next room. I think what happened is that we would move place to place depending on what we had coming up, and I think we had a good stint at the church near Sherbourne for a while; we were there for about a year.

M: Or even the curling club at Broadview and Queen: we were there it seemed like a long time.

D: I remember when we got kicked out of there. We had to go upstairs, there was an outdoor





staircase, and there was a fight, and the cops came, and that was it for that venue.

M: That's when the skinheads really started turning up on the scene was at that club, 'cause I think I sort of made friends with all the skinheads 'cause I figured if anyone's gonna be causing trouble it's gonna be them, and I was big enough I could be friendly with them. And one guy came to me and goes, "One of the skinheads has a gun." And I went, "O.K.," so I went up to him — I think his name was Orbit or something — and said, "Orbit, do you really have a gun?" 'Cause I really can't let you in with a gun." And he went, "nnnnnggggn," and I said, "I tell you what: take it home, or do whatever, get rid of it, and I'll let you in for free." Two or three dollars. So he disappears for awhile, comes back, he shows me his jacket, and I go, "O.K., you're in." [laughter]

G: That's good.

V: And actually I remember this: the only time we faced that economical thing — we were talking about class issues or whatever — was there was a group of skinheads that were actually homeless, very poor youth, and some of the people like Brian in YOUTH YOUTH YOUTH and a few of them knew them, were friends with them, and it was the one time where we faced ... a lot of us

were middle-class Scarborough kids.

G: We had two cars in every driveway.

V: I didn't: we had a station wagon that was twenty-five-years old. But that was the one time I actually personally felt these are kids that actually need the club, and yet at the same time they brought some violence and stuff that came with it. And we did have one time a knife incident, some little mod girl tripped a guy that was running with a knife; I remember the knife splaying across the floor and myself going to talk to the person, saying "Can you leave?" And I'm just like this nice woman going up and saying "Do you mind leaving?" And then he just did. I think it was the one case where we really did have sort of a mix of people that had a different background economically.

M: Most of the fighting was really just people from the outside coming in.

What was the last Start Dancing event that took place? Do you recall? How did Start Dancing stop?

M: I was long gone.

G: Vera was there but she doesn't remember.

V: I don't know ...

You were talking about 1984; was it after

1984, '85, '86; do you remember?

V: Do you remember?

D: No, I'm just thinking: it just petered out, didn't it? I don't think the last night we knew it was the last night.

V: And part of it, my daughter was born in '85, and I was a young parent, completely tired. And I just remember it was around that time we would still have a sort of reunion, twenty or thirty people that had come out a lot would come out and we'd play some records and then we'd go, "We're done." And a lot of people had gone on to other things; I was in teachers' college, other people were getting jobs in different places; I went to Africa for four months ...

G: I actually employed a lot of people, Mark and I were talking about that ...

M: I worked for you for awhile.

G: Yeah, Andy Ford worked for me ...

M: I don't remember getting paid, but I remember working. [laughter]

G: Actually, I'm positive you got paid because that was one thing I was good at, and I got a whole lot of guys that worked ...

Knowledgeable ...

G: ... yeah, and it was because they were there doing the gig, they set up the P.A., they knew

THE IMMEDIATE



RENT BOYS



something about it, and I knew – the main business I have is cabinet building – and one thing that I was always positive about is a guy who knew how to coordinate his mind to his fingers to a guitar would be able to coordinate a drill, and I was right. And so our factory has always employed musicians, so we look for musicians: “Are you a musician? O.K., good, you can probably build a good speaker,” and they could, so it was great. But we had a great group of people that worked with me right up to 1988. Andy Ford was working with me; in fact, I named a whole line of P.A. after that guy – the AF line – ‘cause Andy was just a great guy.

Does he know that?

G: Yeah, he does, actually.

What a tribute.

G: You can name a line after something, or you can name a line after people that you care about and that are good people. And we got another band, player, Rob Stewart was his name, and

we named a line of product after him, the RS line is Rob Stewart. So a lot of people ended up working with me years after Start Dancing from there.

What are your lasting impressions of Start Dancing?

G: That was funny: we all stopped.

D: The car through the door is sort of seared through your memory, but for me, Vera said it: it was all about the music. I just really think about all the sounds that I was introduced to there, and

just the idea of – we were talking about the different classes – but the idea of getting dressed up on Friday night, going out, hear some music, dancing: a very old-fashioned sort of almost ‘50s or ‘60s sort of working-class church-basement-inspired environment, right? I tend to think like Vera more as a whole of what the experience was like, aside from the car driving through the front door.

G: That was all rock ‘n’ roll, too, so it’s all good.

D: But it was really that feeling of, like, Friday night dance-hall music: it was great.

G: Yeah, that was the word for it.

V: And the excitement of seeing a whole bunch of different people. You guys talk about seeing girls: we saw guys. We’re teenagers, and it was amazing to come together with two-three-hundred people, and I think the energy that was

in punk was there, whether people were saying “punk is dead” or not; lots of us had buttons that said that, but it wasn’t. It was really dynamic and fun; I was always excited.

G: I’ve got my CARDBOARD BRAINS button to this day; it’s on my jacket, actually. I’m wearing it here: there you go. But to me it was the people, and I think you kind of alluded to it: the energy of the young people that we all were then and the music that we all listened to, and we listened to a wide variety of different music,



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how we all got along for the sake of music and what music could mean to us, what music could say to us, and how music could lead us into the lives that we have today. To me, that was my lasting impression. That and almost getting killed by a guy driving through the doors in a car.

M: But I think, as well, we were becoming adults. People would say, “We heard you run a nightclub downtown.” I said, “It’s sort of a nightclub, yeah, every Friday night we go and put on a show.” They go, “What’s it called?” And I hated the name, so I said, “We don’t have a name.” [laughter] It sounded so lame: “Start Dancing.” It should be, like, “Proceed Knitting.”

ooooooooohh yeah
it's better than slander
it's better than lies



Sinkin' Ships • Late for Everything tape
Summer of '92 • Long Kesh cd
40 Hells • Looking For Answers 7"
Leatherface • Live In Melbourne cd
Summer of '92 • Saskatchewan cd
v/a • a tribute to Leatherface 2x cd
Crimson Mire • collection tape

in the distro: Nerve No Gains Too Many Doves
The Sainte Catherine's Countdown To Oblivion
The Victim Party School Damage The Rebel Spell
Zwei Tage Ohne Schnupftabak Rome Rome Tiltwheel
The Class Assassins Joe Q Citizen The Tim Version
on the radio: equalizingdistort.blogspot.ca
in town: Whiskey Hearts acoustic collective
1st Sat. of every month at the Press Club bar

rubberfactory.ca



G: Andy Ford's band was called NOTHING IN PARTICULAR, so ...

M: For me, it was like we were becoming adults, and at a very young age we were becoming entrepreneurs, we were taking on a responsibility, and, once again, all of us, we're those same people, we're doing things, we're creating things, and taking responsibility. And if you think about it, when you're fifteen or sixteen or seventeen, you're responsible for putting on a show where people are gonna go and hopefully not die ... no one else was doing it, and I don't know if people are doing it now, but it's huge. I bet there was nothing like that in England. And no one would put that amount of time in for no money.

G: It was a wonderful group of people: that's what I remember the most. I think it's also the nature of punk music that you're dealing at that particular time with people that think differently, and the people that think differently are thinking less of, frankly, less selfishness and more of all of us, more openly, which I think is really valuable for our society to have that kind of thing.

I wanted to ask one last summation question: we started to talk about the impact that Start Dancing had on your lives individually, but I wanted to get a more macro-perspective and get you to say what kind of impact it had on the scene. We talked about bands, too, but more generally, how do you think it had an impact?

D: You look at the things that followed Start Dancing: there was Blow Up, with Davy Love, which was a mod club, and you wonder, "Was

Davy Love ever at Start Dancing?" Obviously, the Mod Club, what Mark Holmes has done, is sort of similar to what was happening at Start Dancing, and even there's that nightclub called Blow Up now that's in Kensington Market, and the guy who runs that, Louis Calabro, is a cool young guy, and he and I are ... I would tell him stories about Start Dancing, and he'd be like, "Wow! That sounds like exactly what I want to do now." And this is a guy who's like twenty eight. But I think I was talking about it before, just that idea of Charlie Angus is there, Andrew Cash is there ...

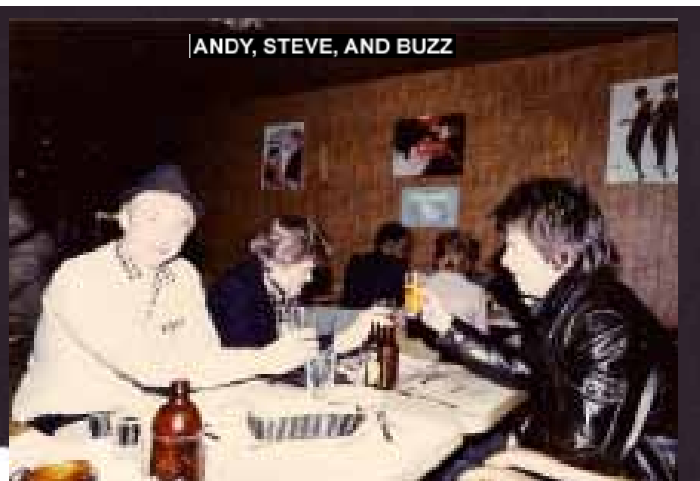
V: Rob Mallion.

D: Rob Mallion. These people are entrenched in society trying to make a difference.

D: And I talked to someone last year, and I remember him saying to me, "You were so serious at Start Dancing back then, I remember that," and I think he was right. I really thought, "We can make something out of this." If I did take it seriously, I thought it was because it was important at the time, and I think that is the legacy. And I think Mark was talking about that as well: people have taken what they learned there and

brought it into their lives and into careers and are having an impact on the arts and the Toronto music scene, so I think that's definitely part of the legacy.

V: Yeah, and I know one thing that followed



right after that was the raves or clubs where young people were trying to get in. That came right at the end of Start Dancing, when kids would start to be going to just places where they had an upstairs floor booked, and that was a

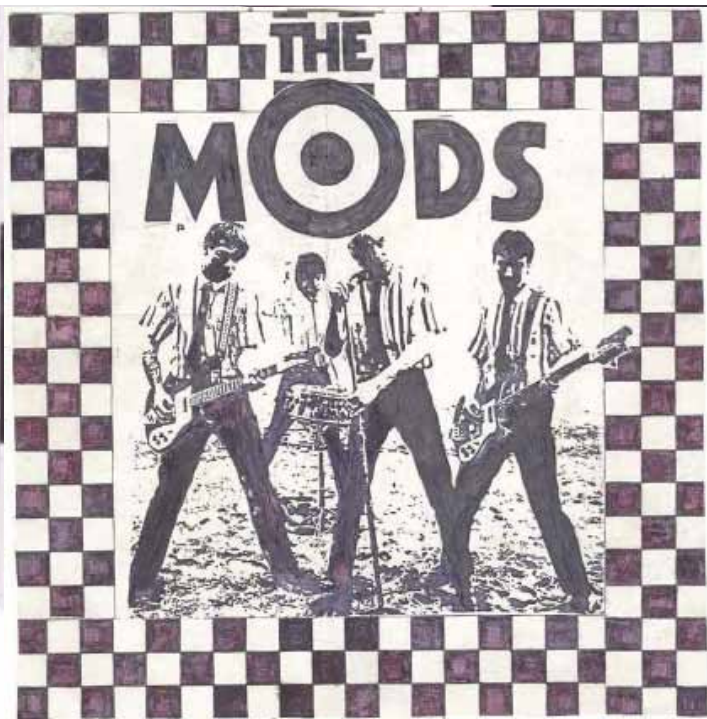
little bit followed up ...

G: It's funny you should say that because I ended up getting a whole lot of people contacting me when I was doing raves because they were not officially doing anything, they would know that they could do something with me. I set up a lot of sound systems for raves, but we always had a pattern of how I would show up if the cops did and I'd sort of say, "Who stole my P.A.?" so I'd get it back. [laughter] The raves would start at one o'clock at night and – do you know what's amazing when you think about the real estate – but right on Spadina in many of the warehouses there, it was amazing 'cause you'd think there were five or six floors up and you'd see nothing, but, boy, you'd get up there and there's hundreds of people.

I remember being at one and there was a cloud of dust; it was the space, it was being renovated or not being used and it was dusty and everyone was dancing and there was dust everywhere. You couldn't see anybody: it was an unofficial smokescreen just from the dirt.

V: I'd say the one other effect it's had on all the individuals that's carried through it's as a teenager you were attracted to punk music, there was something in you that said, "I need something different in this world." And if you see another five-hundred people who feel the same through the course of your teenage years, you go, "Wow: there's a lot of people like that." And I think that's the whole thing of hope because I was watching a thing on heavy metal the other day, and they said, "We all have hope. We all like the same kind of music, there's





something to get up out of bed for.” And I think that’s a pretty incredible message; like I know myself I carry it still. I’ve got to do something; I can’t just sit here ...

‘Cause things can be pretty shitty and it can be pretty daunting.

G: Well, with the JAM, when they’re singing about “A Town Called Malice,” and he says, “I’d rather bring joy to this town called Malice,” so even though it was a sad song it was an optimistic song, ironically; he sort of says, “You can make things better.” And I think that’s a message that was in a lot of music, too.

M: I think as well we think about teenagers and we think about suicide rates and whatnot, and I know that’s heavy, but we were all outsiders. And if we would’ve had nowhere to congregate, what would have happened? ‘Cause I was really the outsider at school: I looked like a bloody mess and no girl was gonna go near me, teachers thought I was on drugs, and it was quite the opposite: I wasn’t doing any drugs or any alcohol, and people had really strange opinions of what you were, and that really starts to hammer away on your psyche. So when you start to meet other people that are like that, you go, “O.K., I’m not a total freak: there’s a few other outsiders like me.” And then on Friday night there’s three-hundred people, and you know what? They’re nice. Well, not all of them, but a lot of them are nice ...

V: Or share the same anger and the same frustration. Frustration with the world, frustration with apathy, frustration with people who don’t care.

M: Vera was very careful about ... I can think of certain complaints we had: I can remember a girl coming up to you, saying that “Some of the guys are making fun of my friend ‘cause he’s gay.” And I went, “Who’s gay? That guy there? He



when the guys from BERLIN WAVE and big black Anthony and all those guys turned up, Vera said, “Your friends are scaring people,” so I had to go up to Tim and say, “I think you’re somehow scaring people, and I don’t know how you’re doing it.” And they weren’t really doing anything, but I think it was just because all these big hardcore guys came in and they were huge that it was a little intimidating, but when they saw me talking to them and laughing, then everything calmed down. So it was really important that all the outsiders really felt that they belonged.

V: And isn’t that interesting: L’ETRANGER is “the outsider.” The name of that band is from the Camus novel. And I agree with you: I think that a lot of people found a home, and we’re all doing something interesting in our lives now, and who knows if we would have had the hope to do it if we hadn’t had another group of people interested in the same thing.

G: Here’s a horrible thought: don’t we need a Start Dancing today?

M: No.

G: Nowadays it’s the same thing: kids have a lack of self-esteem, and a lack of belonging, and back then Start Dancing was there for all of those people, but even today it’s just as prevalent, the human consciousness of wanting to feel like you belong is still there, and at least

doesn’t have a sign on that says he’s gay.” So I went and talked to the other people and they said, “we didn’t say anything,” but we really made sure that we made other people feel belonged. And even I can remember



for us we had a place where we could do things and have people feel like they belonged. And I think Mark just gave a really good example of where we would go and talk to people.

M: It wasn’t about the entry fee, and it wasn’t about the door admission, we’re just gonna make sure that you belong. We’re all parents here, we all have kids, and I was just talking to Vera about my daughter, and she’s twelve, and I’m proud of her because she thinks about everyone else’s feelings, and if someone’s left out she wants to make sure that they’re brought in. And as twelve-year-old girl, she’s going to start going through all that stuff that girls go through: who’s on the in, who’s on the out? So I want to make sure that my kids are gonna do the same thing, move forward in life and make sure that people feel like they belong, and if someone’s feelings are hurt, go to them and make sure they’re better. Wasn’t this about making a better future? If it is, you do it through your children.

REVIEWS

Boston Strangler "Primitive" LP

This is one of the best name's for a band from Boston. And the title track is about this particular serial killer. How fitting? And didn't another band from the area have a fixation on serial killers? OUT COLD if I'm not mistaken. Well I would say that they are more than a thematic influence on BOSTON STRANGLER. The vocalist has a Cliff Hanger meets John Sox inflection to his vocals which figures into the Boston connection. Think the F.U.'S meets OUT COLD for the BOSTON STRANGLER sound. (Fun with Smack – 872 Pleasant Street / Raynham, MA / 02767 / USA)



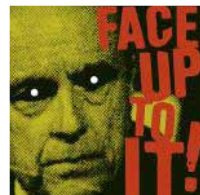
Extreme Noise Terror "Law of Retaliation" CD

I was just reading about ENT in Ian Glasper's book "Trapped in a Scene". I have to say I never really paid much attention to them and had just written them off as some UK noise merchants. There was some bands like HERESY and RIPCORN who I listened to. But NAPALM DEATH and ENT were bands I looked past. It had more to do with the death metal like vocals that the band embraced. It is something about cookie monster vocals that just makes me not take the band seriously. And EXTREME NOISE TERROR were a band to be taken seriously. They set out to play extreme music, right from their inception. Their lyrics are incredible. And they haven't shied away from their criticisms of religion or work or power.



Face Up To It "Le Meilleur d'Entre Nous" ep

This French band may takes inspiration in the form of speed and frantic pace from the UK legends that they named themselves after, HERESY. But if you are to go into this expecting a HERESY tribute you will be sorely disappointed. And to be honest I would be disappointed if the band were just to ape the HERESY's sound. When I look back at HERESY's development in sound I hear three different periods. The beginning which is about being all about the speed characterized by the split with CONCRETE SOX, the transition between speed and listenability characterized by the "Face Up To It" album and the blatant US worship characterized by the releases after "Face Up To It". FACE UP TO IT join the crop of scene veterans to come together and put together an inspired recording. FACE UP TO IT are made up of former band members of JEAN SEBERG, OPSTAND, and GASMASK TERROR, which makes sense for why speed is such a big part of the sound. But the riffing is characterized more by fast picking which reminds me of crossover in the vein of RKL. And you get a bit of that carefree feel in songs like "Pizza Boxes & Duct Tape" against songs like "Nuclear accidents for dummies". There is a healthy mix of humour and seriousness on this release. And although this took four years to come out, the seven songs will whip by in no time. (Stonehenge – B. P. 30005 / 33037 Bordeaux / France / www.stonehengerecords.com)



Guitar Gangsters "Class of '76" CD

A few years back COCKSPARRER brought us "Spirit of '76" and now the GUITAR GANGSTERS keep that alive with the "Class of '76". 28 years in and the Ley Brothers continue to make this project band work. But with 17 other releases under their belt this is hardly a project band, that's just the way they describe themselves. The opening track "Crystalina" is one of the best songs on this release with the INFA RIOT like alarm sounding guitar that transforms into a something that sounds



like it is from STIFF LITTLE FINGER's "Guitar and Drums", which is a record that I loved intensely. So I really love this opening song. The second song "Nowhere to Nowhere" is also a cracker with it's generational analysis of punk that could be on par with the WHO's "My Generation" in terms of potent messages. "Never be fooled" is one of my favourites from the release because of it's currency on the class divide and resonates with all the 99% messaging out there now. My point is that this release is filled with great song writing. It is in keeping with that generation of punks that have continued to record and release great stuff and is keeping with the new COCKSPARRER release already mentioned and the STIFF LITTLE FINGERS and the PARTISANS "Idiot Nation". Locally this is on par with bands like the CLASS ASSASSINS and the FALLOUT. (Ril Rec - Daimler Str. 22 / 46049 Oberhausen / Germany / www.rilrec.de)

Human Touch ep

This reminds me a lot of MARGARET THRASHER and although the vocals are very similar to Juls Generic's, there is a certain Doc Dart character to them. The music also has a bit of an I OBJECT in the thrashed out parts but there is a quirky frenetic ROBOT HAS WEREWOLF HAND structure to the songs. The music also borrows more from the garage scene that has taken over in Buffalo so you can't just measure this against the scene's ghosts. Think of SPITBOY with a wider berth of influences to pull from. (Feral Kid Records - 27 Ripley Place / Buffalo, NY / 14213 / USA / www.feralkidrecords.com)



Kietolaki LP

This is a collection of all the demos, eps and comps that this band from Turku, Finland has recorded since 2005. It is an impressive repertoire and some of the labels are hard to track down so it is a great that this American label that has done two of the eps already has pulled everything else together in one spot. The cover art on this is incredible. The collage on the foldout poster is amazing. The effort in general matches the ferocious sound that this band comes at you with. (Moo Cow – 38 Larch Circle / Belmont, MA / 02478 / USA)



Manliftingbanner "The revolution continues" Double LP

MANLIFTINGBANNER have always been this left wing revolutionary hardcore band from Holland. I have listened to them and loved them ever since I found out about them which is right from the beginning. But it has always been from afar which is where I continue to follow them with the reunion and this collection which contains a whole side of newly recorded material. The fire still burns within their songs and the focus is still aimed at the capitalist system. The songs take into consideration elements of the Arab spring and it is encouraging to see some old timers still haven't lost that the goal of change is the only thing that matters. To dialectic materialists it is the only constant. Well MANLIFTINGBANNER being straight edge revolutionaries is the only other constant and this new material is like the band never stopped. For those playing catch up, the rest of the band's material from "the Myth of Freedom" to "the 10's that shook the world" are on here. Fast ripping straight edge with a revolutionary message. This is the band that inspired so many. Find out what the fuss is about. (Crucial Response – von-der-mark Str 31 / 47137 Duisburg / Germany / www.crucialresponse.com)



No More Art cassette

The lineage in this band is crazy. The band is from Hamburg but the guitarist was in BORN DEAD and the RED DONS just to mention a few names. The band manages to combine that WIPERS sound but with the happiest band in punk



the BUZZCOCKS. And to add to the melody the singer's vocals have that singing style that Becky Bondage of the VICE SQUAD or Penelope Houston of the AVENGERS were known for. They totally remind me of the BAYONETTES from our scene a few years ago. But they probably remind others of music that has come out of Sweden and Portland in the last little bit. And an ep has just come out made up of the first two songs from this demo so why not just order this and get the two extra songs. (Kink Records – www.kink-records.de)

OSK “Wretched Existence // Bleak Future 2007-2010” CD

I don't know anything about OSK, other than they are from Vancouver, which would explain the split they did with WARHERO who are from Squamish. This is exceptional grindcore and they get humour points for songs like “Crush your Canadian Idol”. This is a discography of the band's efforts which borrow heavily from the ENDLESS BLOCKADE, the SWARM, and MAGRUDERGRIND. This is intense, i.e. not for the weak. This is top notch and I wish I knew about this band while they were a band. (To live a lie – 2825 Van Dyke Road / Raleigh, NC / 27607-7021 / USA / www.tolivealie.com)



Paper Bags “Knife” ep

This band has a great driving punk 'n roll sound. Take the BRIEFS and inject them with NEW BOMB TURKS fuel and set it all ablaze with Steve Jones riffage and the PAPER BAGS is what you got. Add a tribute to Bruce Roehers (“S.Y.F.A.T.B.”) and some great gimmicks with the cover and a band shot involving paper bags which looks like an homage to the unknown comic and this is a well rounded 45. “Mommi, I'm a misfit” is another great screamer, and I love the tribute at the end of the song with a play on “Mommy can I go out and kill tonight”. All Killer no filler. (No Front Teeth – www.nofrontteeth.net)

Pick Your Side “Let me show you how democracy works” LP

Jeff Beckmann of CHOKEHOLD / HAYMAKER fame teams up with the drummer from FUCK THE FACTS to start up this crushing grumpy old man band. Think along the lines of LOW THREAT PROFILE. This is going to blow your mind with how harsh and over the top the music is. It is part power violence and part just super charged hardcore. Beckman is angrier than ever and that fuels the venom behind the jaded outlook on society. And I happen to agree with him on most of it, but I fit into the demographic. “More Cops, More Crime” is a sentiment I think is a truism. Musically this is a continuation of HAYMAKER so expect some of that with more of a power violence edge to it. (A389 Records – P.O. Box 12058 / Baltimore, MD / 21281 / USA / www.a389records.com)



Plates LP

This is PLATES first LP. PLATES are from Buffalo and this recording is heavier and more pensive. There is a bunch of electronic theremin like creepy space noises throughout this record which just adds to a sinister level in a SERVOTRON sort of way. The music plows along in PISSED HAPPY CHILDREN meets KILLDOZER sort of way, which may help make sense out of the power sludge description in MRR. There is a lot of depth to this record that requires multiple listens and the lyrics have an introspective side to them but they are not totally unrelatable, which elevates them from the arty side of emo. It's like if working class kids went to art school.

(Big Neck – P.O. box 8144 / Reston, VA / 20195 / USA / www.bigneckrecors.com)



Sectarian Violence “No Regards” ep

When I think of SECTARIAN VIOLENCE I think of a old firm game. But these guys aren't Scottish even if one person is from the UK. This is an international super group with folks from Sweden, the UK and the States. The Yank in the bunch is the singer from COKE BUST. And like all super groups this is super raging. I remember a term that Felix von Havoc was developing for this youth crew meets crust hybrid which was youth crust. That's what SECTARIAN VIOLENCE play. You get lots of these breakdowns with feedback and guitar slides to give a chaos feeling to it all. On the song you get a spoken word bit on corruption making it feel like CONFLICT has joined the session. This is outrageously raging. I hope there is more chances for this group to work together. (Grave Mistake - - P.O. Box 2482 / Richmond, VA / 23241 / USA / www.gravemistakerecords.blogspot.ca)



Shipwrecked “the Last Pagans” LP

SHIPWRECKED are a new band from Norway with a LAST RITES sound and Viking themes to their songs. They remind me of INSURANCE RISK and how well they ape that pre-SLAPSHOT choke sound of NEGATIVE FX and LAST RITES. SHIPWRECKED follow in what I am beginning to think is a Norwegian tradition. Or maybe they just share members. SHIPWRECKED is made up of members of INSURANCE RISK, ONWARD, and COMMON CAUSE. SHIPWRECKED had also released a demo and an ep, but this was their first full length. It's unfortunate because this demonstrates a lot of promise from the forgotten about most westernly Scandinavian peninsula. (Crucial Response – vonder-mark Str 31 / 47137 Duisburg / Germany / www.crucialresponse.com)



Sickoids LP

I have been super curious to hear this because of the SUBHUMANS reference to the band name. Well I am hear to tell you that you shouldn't go into this expecting an “Incorrect Thoughts” tribute. But you could go into this looking at a contemporary update of HUSKER DU's “Zen Arcade” without the experimental “Recurring Dream” material. SICKOIDS boil down the songs on the ADD side and as a result they fill a song with loads of twists and turns that churn over top of a manic pace usually. I have to say that this is an improvement on HUSKER DU's sound. The vocals sound identical to Bob Mould's as heard on “Metal Circus” except maybe even a little more hoarsely screamed. The guitar jangle and feedback combo is there although maybe a little more subdued in the mix. But that gives the SICKOIDS identity that knockoff tribute status doesn't garner. There is a lot more in the songs on this full length than re-making any of the early HUSKER classics would be. Definitely for fans of HUSKER DU, but this has a lot more appeal than that. (Hardware Records – P.O. Box 1646 / 49006 Osnabruck / Germany / www.hardware-records.com)



Weak Link “Drop the Dime” ep

I think this is WEAK LINK's first official release and it grabs you by the throat and pummels you song after song. It's like the rock is getting back at us from away for a lifetime of Newfie jokes. This also reflects the energy and vitality of the scene that I have heard about through the likes of Rodney Wall, Steve Musgrave, and Dave Munro. The kids are having their say in St. John's and they don't give a fuck about the geographic isolation. This is very youth crew oriented and the bass being so upfront reminds me of the HARD STANCE “Standing Hard” demo or STRAIGHT AHEAD's demos. The WEAK LINK recording does have a herky jerky feel that STRAIGHT AHEAD had but less on the STARK RAVING MAD side of things and more on the MEAT PUPPETS side of things. (Weak Link – robertatrisk@gmail.com)

